

The Drift into Cities.

Massachusetts is dismayed to learn from her recently completed decennial census that, whereas the population of the State has increased 28 per cent during the last ten years, the gain is confined entirely to the manufacturing cities, and that there has been a great falling off of the rural population. This means that the farms are being abandoned, and that farmers' sons and daughters have gone into the factories of the cities.

The press of the State discusses the problem from numerous points of view. One is the old cry that rural life is hard and uninviting under present conditions, and that it could be made more attractive by instituting a higher and better form of social pleasures. This is undoubtedly a leading cause for deserting the farms, but one equally as potent is the hard and wearing life of farming in the Eastern States. There the farms must be large, and hence a compact rural population is impossible. Again, the nature of Eastern farmwork virtually prohibits summer indulgence in social pleasures, and the winters are so cold as to make them a task.

It is a proper aim in life to live in comfort, and to invest the environment with as many wholesome pleasures as possible. No young man or woman who finds farm life burdensome and city life pleasant can be blamed for exercising a preference for the city, even though the income may be smaller. For there are pleasures in life apart from money-making; and, considering even this phase of the matter, there is rarely a chance to make more money on an Eastern farm than in some humble capacity in the city. The Massachusetts case would not be deserving of so much attention did it not represent a general condition throughout the Eastern States.

In California the situation is radically different. In spite of the fact that for the last few years until recently the profits of farming have been small, there is no tendency to drift cityward. A visit to any one of the favorite agricultural communities will explain the matter at once. Here the farms are small; the people, living close together, can mingle on terms of intimacy impossible in Eastern rural districts; there is no time of the year, summer or winter, when the conditions of rural work or of climate place restrictions on social intercourse; and all the conditions combine to make farming intrinsically so attractive that there is no inducement to abandon the farm for the city.

A striking illustration of this—practically unheard of in the East—is the abandonment of the city for the farm by wealthy families, who establish themselves on large orchards or vineyards, preferring the delights of rural life to those offered by the city. This is so common and so remarkable that it deserves the consideration of those Eastern young men and women to whom farm life is distasteful. One might think that wealthy persons would be insane to leave the city, with all its allurements, to seek greater pleasure in the country, and so they would be regarded in the East. Not so here; and if a census of wealthy business men should be taken it would likely develop the fact that a very large portion of them would gladly exchange city life in California for the pleasures of the country if they could do so without sacrificing their business too heavily.—San Francisco Call.

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John T. Waterhouse



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